



# **Athena SWAN Institution Application**

**SAGE Cygnet Award**



**Institution Context**

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## SYNONYMS

<b>ARC</b>	Australian Research Council
<b>CESE</b>	College of Engineering, Science and Environment
<b>CHMW</b>	College of Health, Medicine and Wellbeing
<b>CHSF</b>	College of Human and Social Futures
<b>EDI</b>	Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
<b>FTE</b>	Full-time Equivalent
<b>HERDC</b>	Higher Education Research Data Collection
<b>LGBTIQA+</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual
<b>PALS</b>	Pathways and Academic Learning Support
<b>PVC</b>	Pro-Vice Chancellor
<b>SAGE</b>	Science in Australia Gender Equity
<b>STEMM</b>	Science, Technology, Mathematics and Medicine

## SAGE Cygnet Award – Institutional Context



**SAGE**  
SCIENCE IN AUSTRALIA  
GENDER EQUITY

## SAGE Cygnet Award Application

<b>Name of institution</b>	University of Newcastle
<b>Date of application</b>	29 June 2023
<b>Award Level</b>	Cygnet
<b>Date joined Athena SWAN</b>	Cohort One – January 2016
<b>Contact for application</b>	Professor Jennifer Milam, Pro-Vice Chancellor Academic Excellence
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## BACKGROUND

Established in 1965, the University of Newcastle's main campus is in Newcastle, New South Wales. The University of Newcastle also operates satellite campuses at the Central Coast, Sydney, the Mid-North Coast, and Singapore<sup>1</sup>. The University is currently the largest single employer and the only University in the Hunter Region, leading its transition from coal and steel to a knowledge-based regional economy. The University has two main purposes, the first is to deliver an outstanding student experience, preparing graduates for life in an increasingly interconnected society. The second is to serve the regions by taking research that matters to the world and bringing our global expertise home.



Figure 1. Image of campus features

## STRATEGIC PLANNING 2020-2025

The University's strategic plan, with the key message of 'Looking Ahead' (see Figure 2), is the framework for creating a future where Australia's first peoples are empowered and enjoy true equality, and everyone who has the drive and talent to succeed is given the opportunity to study. The University of Newcastle is proud to be distinguished by its commitment to equity, excellence, engagement, and sustainability (Figure 3). These four values underpin the operations of the University. For more than 50 years, the University of Newcastle has demonstrated equity of access to higher education and excellence.

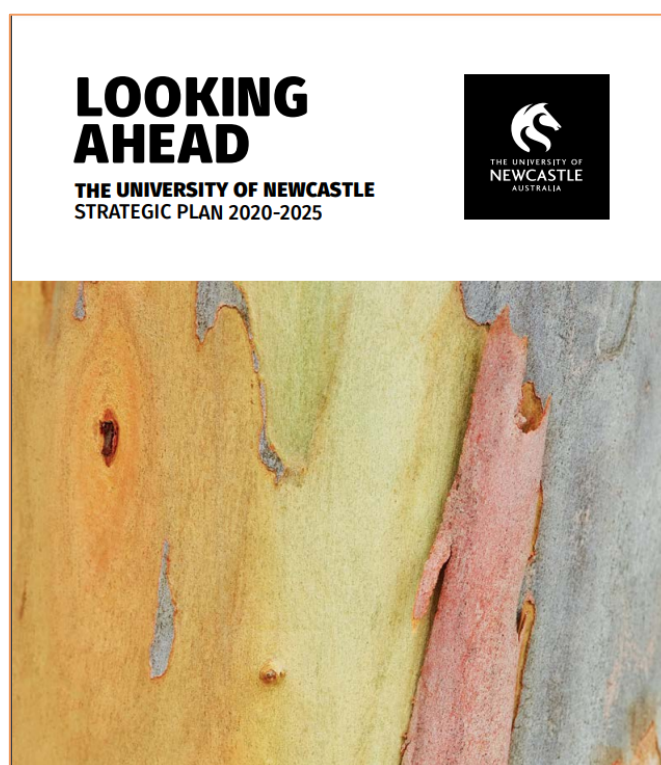


Figure 2. Cover page of the strategic planning

<h2>Our values</h2> <p>Our values set the standards that we expect, encourage and nurture in our staff and students. They guide our decision-making and position us to achieve our purpose.</p>	<h3>Excellence</h3> <p>We pursue the exceptional and strive for innovation in our teaching, research and operating environment.</p>	<h3>Engagement</h3> <p>Our staff, students, alumni and communities are deeply connected to the challenges and opportunities in our regions and beyond.</p>
	<h3>Equity</h3> <p>Our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusiveness is fundamental to everything we do. We believe that every person has the right to participate and succeed.</p>	<h3>Sustainability</h3> <p>We are ethically minded and prioritise responsible management of our environment and financial resources.</p>

Figure 3. University of Newcastle's values

The University of Newcastle has six strategic initiatives: Commitment to Indigenous Higher Education, Engagement Priorities; Life-Ready Graduates; Asia Pacific Focus; Reimagining Our Campuses; and Inspiring People. The University's 2025 goals for each of the strategic initiatives has been determined through the lens of the four values. Athena SWAN's focus, 'equity', is among the four values of the University, and achieving Silver Athena SWAN accreditation is one of the 2025 goals of the University under the strategic initiative 'Inspiring People' (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** University of Newcastle's 2025 Goals for Inspiring people

## GOVERNANCE

The University is governed by a Council that is comprised of 16 members (males = 9 and females = 7) to provide strategic guidance and to oversee senior management in carrying out that strategic direction. The Council retains control of key decisions through a schedule of reserved matters and delegates other matters to its committees, the Vice-Chancellor, Academic Senate, and additional management teams.

Executive Committee is a forum for the executive to share information and provide advice to the Vice-Chancellor on major strategic matters. The Executive Committee defines and focuses on the University's strategic direction in line with the strategic plan. The Committee is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and has 16 members (males = 9 and females = 7) The organisational structure of the University of Newcastle is presented in Figure 5.

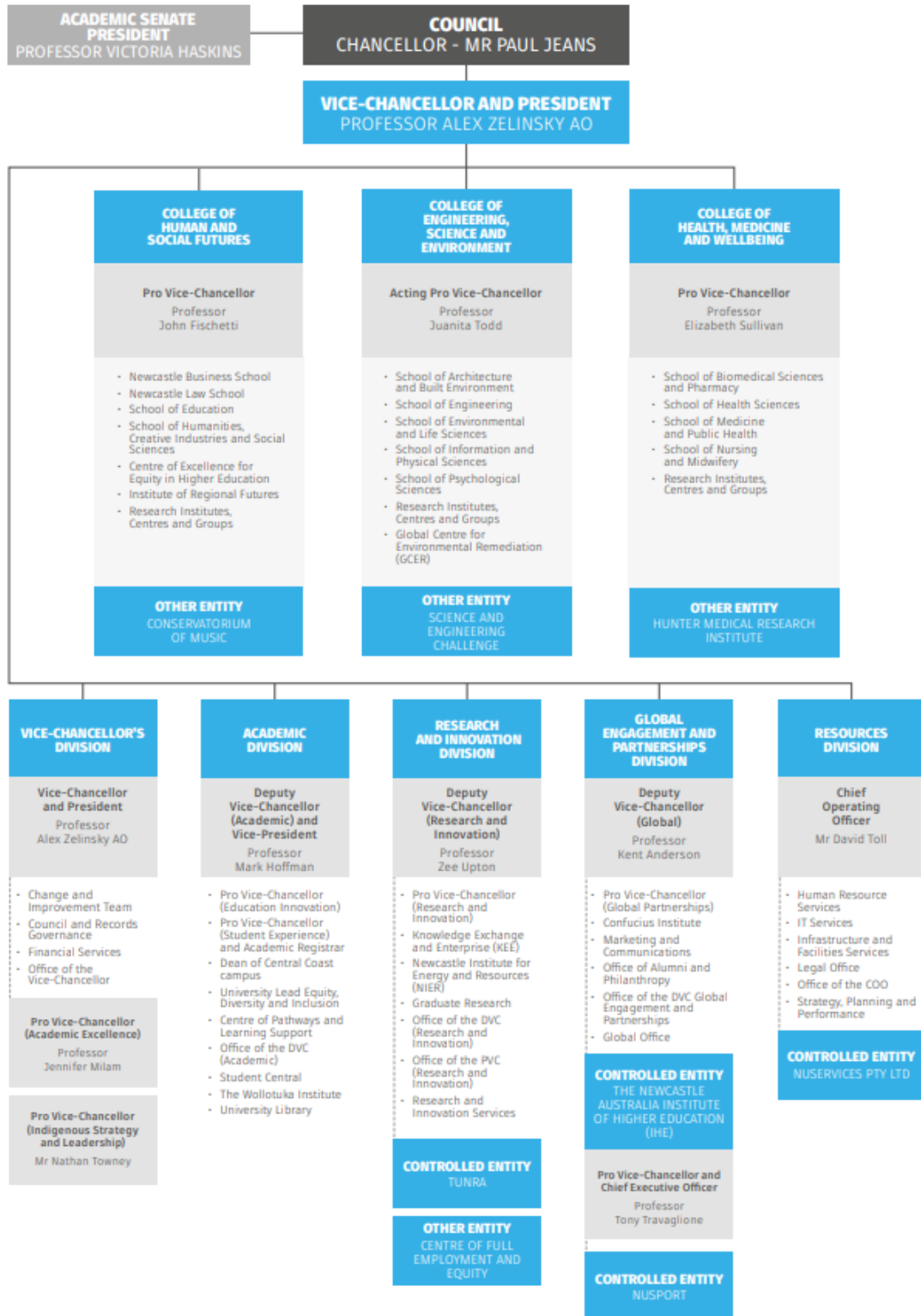


Figure 5: University of Newcastle Organisation Structure

## SIZE AND STRUCTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY

The University of Newcastle has three colleges and five divisions. Each college is represented by the number of schools (Table 1). Two colleges are STEMM focused: the College of Engineering, Science and Environment (CESE); and the College of Health, Medicine and Wellbeing (CHMW). There is a third non-STEMM college: the College of Human and Social Futures (CHSF).

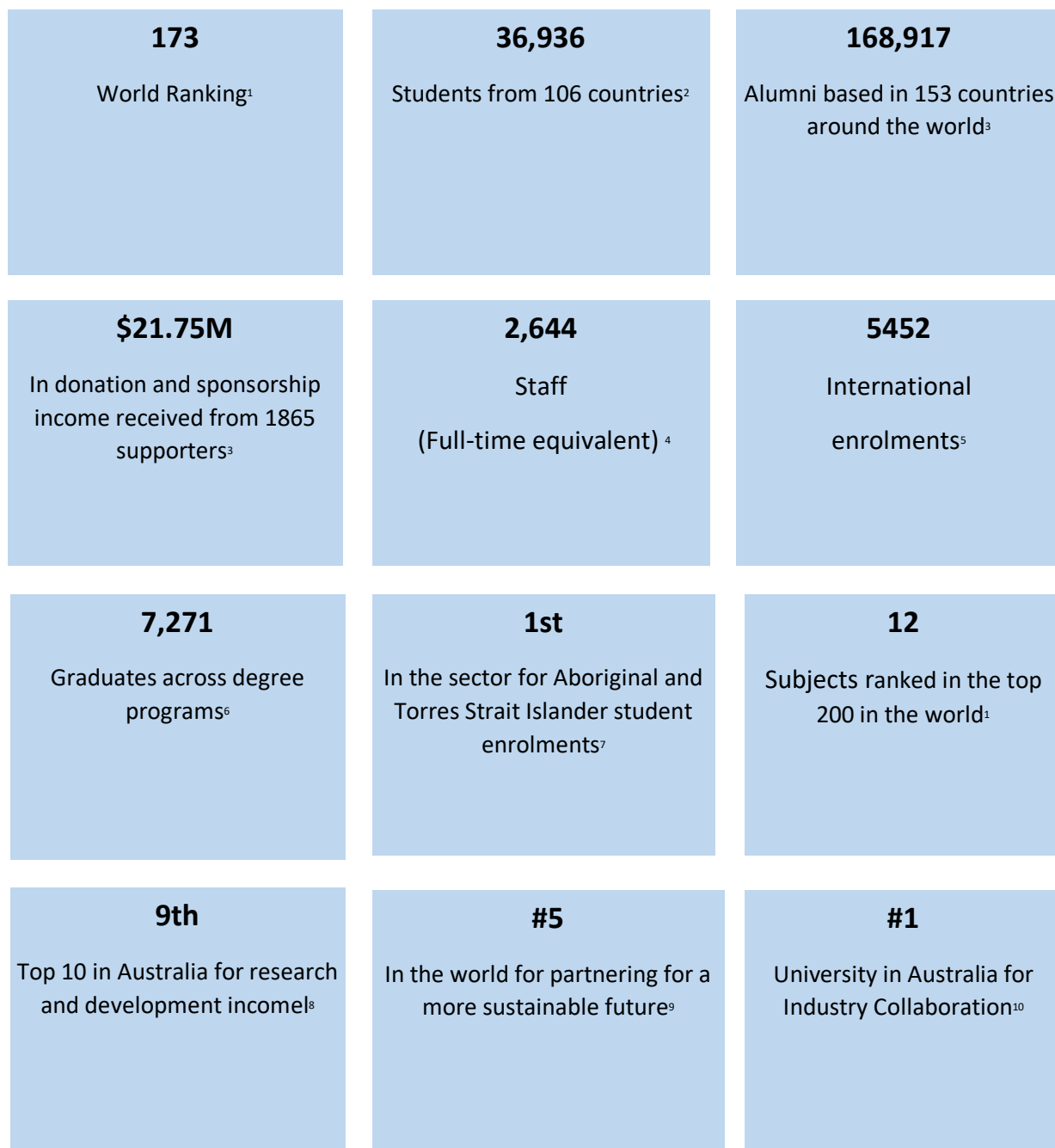
A combination of education and research programs are the foundations of a world-class university. The University offers 278 undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs, and 193 research masters (MPhil) and PhD programs. In 2022 there were 31,484 domestic and 5,452 international students from 106 countries; and 7271 graduating students. Enrolments included over 1421 Indigenous students (4.5% of enrolments), and 15,113 (50.3%) ‘first in family’ to attend university. Figure 6 shows in summary the size of our university by numbers.

**Table 1.** University of Newcastle’s Colleges, Schools, and Divisions

CESE	School of Architecture and Built Environment School of Engineering School of Environmental and Life Sciences School of Information and Physical Sciences School of Psychological Sciences
CHMW	School of Biomedical Sciences and Pharmacy School of Health Sciences School of Medicine and Public Health School of Nursing and Midwifery
CHSF	Newcastle Business School Newcastle Law School School of Education School of Humanities, Creative Industries and Social Science
Divisions	Vice-Chancellor Academic Global Engagement and Partnership Research and Innovation Resources

The University of Newcastle is a research-intensive university, ranking in the top eight of all Australian universities in the 2018 Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) exercise and in the top nine for research income (HERDC). Research strengths include STEMM areas of science, technology, mathematics, health, and medicine. The University of Newcastle boasts several Priority Research Centres (PRCs) in STEMM areas and flagship research centres including the Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI) and Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources (NIER).





**Figure 6.** University of Newcastle by number

Data Source

1.QS World University Rankings 2023. 2.The University of Newcastle Data Warehouse. 3.Salesforce as at Jan 10 2023. 4.Department of Education, Skills and Employment Higher Education Staff Statistics. 5.Alumni and Donor Salesforce CRM as at 3 February 2023. 6.Completed program enrolments for undergraduate and postgraduate award programs. 7.Department of Education, Skills and Employment Higher Education Student Statistics. 8.QS World University Rankings by Subject 2022. The Audited Higher Education Research Data Collection Returns, 2021. Innovation Connections data 2015 – 2022.

## STAFF AND STUDENT PROFILES

In 2023, the University of Newcastle employed 3269 (headcount) staff ongoing and fixed term, divided into 1293 academic and 1976 professional staff. Females comprised 53% of academic positions and 73% of professional positions. In addition, there are 443 full-time equivalent (FTE)<sup>2</sup> casual academic and professional, with females comprising 64% (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Staff number (headcount) by role in 2021

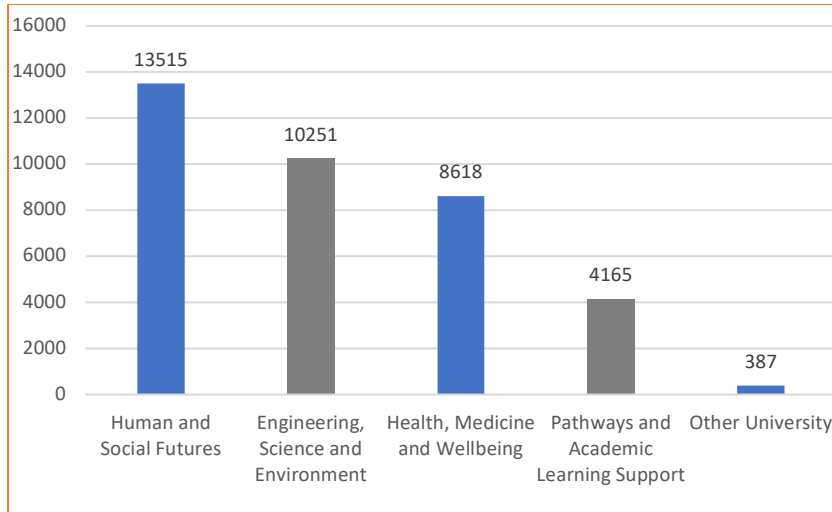
Job Type	Female (n)	Male (n)	N (n)	X (n)	Total (n)
<i>Staff Number</i>					
Academic	687	605	1		1293
Professional	1437	538		1	1976
<b>Total</b>	<b>2124</b>	<b>1143</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3269</b>
<i>Casual staff (FTE)</i>					
Academic	171	91		1	263
Professional	113	66		1	180
<b>Total</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>157</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>443</b>

The proportions of women staff in the colleges are: 70.5% (CHMW), 54.2% (CHSF), and 33.7% (CESE) for academic staff; and 83.9% (CHMW), 74.6% (CHSF), and 61.5% (CESE) for professional staff (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Staff number (headcount) by gender and college

Staff headcount 2023	College	Job Type	Female		Male		X (n)		Total N
			N	%	N	%	N	%	
CHMW	Academic	356	70.5%	149	29.5%		0.0%	505	
	Professional	343	83.9%	65	15.9%	1	0.2%	409	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>699</b>	<b>76.5%</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>23.4%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>914</b>	
CHSF	Academic	141	54.2%	119	45.8%		0.0%	260	
	Professional	100	74.6%	34	25.4%		0.0%	134	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>61.2%</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>38.8%</b>		<b>0.0%</b>	<b>394</b>	
CESE	Academic	159	33.7%	313	66.3%		0.0%	472	
	Professional	139	61.5%	87	38.5%		0.0%	226	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>42.7%</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>57.3%</b>		<b>0.0%</b>	<b>698</b>	
<b>Total</b>		<b>1238</b>	<b>61.7%</b>	<b>767</b>	<b>38.2%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>2006</b>	

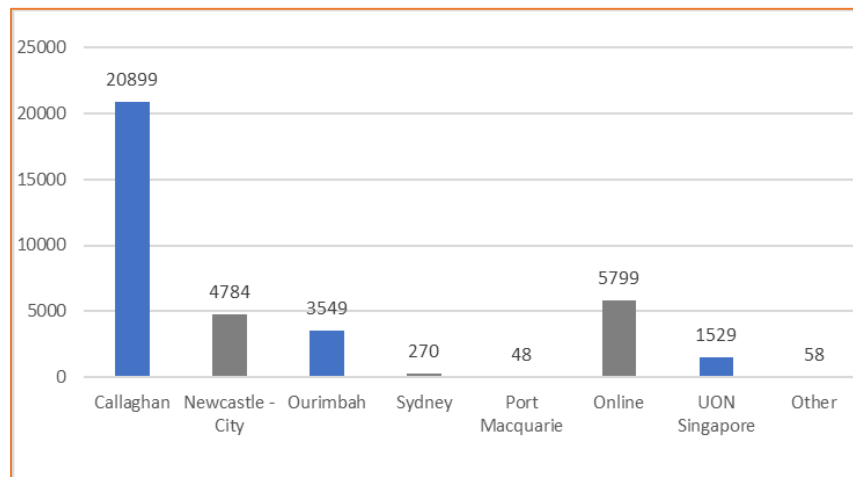
The University of Newcastle enrolled 36,936 students in 2022, with the distribution across the three Colleges and enabling programs shown in Figure 7.



**Figure 7.** Student enrolments by college and area

\*\*Other University includes The Wollotuka Institute, non-award studies, exchange, and study abroad

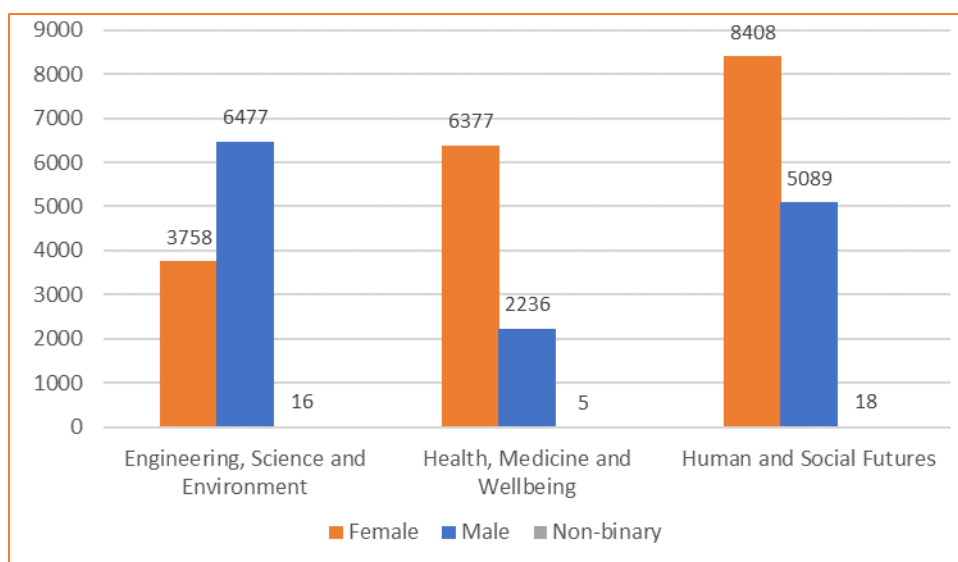
The distribution of student enrolments across the various campuses of the University of Newcastle is shown in Figure 8.



**Figure 8.** Student enrolments by campus

\*\* Other - Comprises third-party locations UN College of International Education Nurture - BINUS Nurture – UTCC

The proportion of female students in the colleges is 57%. Figure 9 shows the number of students by gender per college.



**Figure 9.** Student enrolments by gender and college

\*\*Shows only students enrolled in the three colleges (excludes PALS and Other University)

## EQUITY DIVERSITY & INCLUSION (EDI)

The University is committed to widening participation, promoting diversity and fairness, overcoming injustice, and increasing success for all. The University’s EDI eco-system comprises a number of EDI related portfolios that contribute towards a positive experience for students and staff from all backgrounds. These include: the EDI Unit; Pathways & Enabling; Accessibility; Indigenous Strategy & Leadership; the Wollotuka Institute; the Centre for Excellence in Equity in Higher Education; and Academic Excellence. EDI demographics for students and staff are presented in Table 4. EDI initiatives are presented in Figure 10.

**Table 4.** EDI Demographics/Metrics for Students and staff (2022)

Variable	Proportion
<b>Students</b>	
Indigenous	4.5%
Disability (domestic)	16.6%
Low Socio-Economic Status	22.0%
First in Family	48.0%
Regional & Remote	18.4%
<b>Staff</b>	
Indigenous	3.1%
Women	64.7%
Disability	1.5%
First Language Not English	8.2%

## EDI INITIATIVES:

<p><b>The Vice-Chancellor Athena SWAN Fund Awards:</b> Embedding the goals of Athena SWAN into the broader university community by providing funding to facilitate gender equity initiatives and promote workplace inclusion.</p>
<p><b>Joint Statement on gender equity and COVID-19:</b> Signatory to joint sector statement acknowledging University's commitment to addressing the gendered effects of COVID-19 and keeping gender equity a priority.</p>
<p><b>Gender Equity Pledge:</b> Senior leaders and staff commit to making gender equity a priority, leading by example and, improving gender balance on committees and in forums.</p>
<p><b>STEM Outreach:</b> Flagship programs include the Award-winning Science &amp; Engineering Challenge established by the University in 2000 (run nationally) and HunterWiSE established in 2017.</p>
<p><b>Indigenous advancement:</b> Achieved through a number of strategies such as the Indigenous Employment Strategy; Cultural Capability Framework and Stretch Reconciliation Plan.</p>
<p><b>Enabling programs:</b> Australia's largest provider of enabling programs including a range of alternative entry pathways into university for students from diverse backgrounds.</p>
<p><b>Accessibility and Inclusion:</b> Sub-committee established to develop a new Accessibility Action Plan to improve the experience of students and staff with a disability.</p>
<p><b>LGBTIQA+:</b> ALLY training provided for staff and network committed to providing a safe and inclusive environment for all regardless of gender identity.</p>
<p><b>Parenting and caring:</b> Flexible study and workplace policies and benefits to help staff and students manage family responsibilities. Breast-Feeding Friendly Workplace Accredited.</p>
<p><b>Sexual Harassment/Discrimination – 'Respect Now Always' and '#No Room For' campaigns, 'Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Violence' and 'Consent Matters' training, Support Services.</b></p>
<p><b>Mental health:</b> Employee Assistance Programme provides confidential and free counselling service for staff and immediate family. Students have access to onsite Counsellors and support.</p>
<p><b>Spiritual Health:</b> Chaplains from various faiths provide spiritual, religious, ethical, pastoral, and personal support and care in addition to meditation services which are also available</p>
<p><b>Cultural diversity and belonging:</b> Participation in 'Racism Stops With Me Campaign' and Events to celebrate diversity of faith/religion/background including religious days of observance.</p>

Figure 10. EDI Initiatives

## INSTITUTION'S SAGE JOURNEY TO DATE

After receiving Bronze in 2018 as part of the Pilot Group, the University established Silver Accreditation as an Institutional KPI demonstrating its continued commitment towards gender equity. A new EDI Unit was formed in 2019 under the Academic Division and this Unit manages the activities of the Athena SWAN project under the leadership of the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Academic Excellence.

The original Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Team was renewed post Bronze with the current Athena SWAN Working Party acting as a sub-committee to the University's Institutional EDI Committee (Table 5). The EDI Committee provides recommendations and updates to the University's Executive Committee on a regular basis. Other significant stakeholders such as the Women's Professorial Network, Academic Senate, the People and Culture Committee of Council, and the Inspiring People Program Board are also updated regularly.

**Table 5.** Athena SWAN Working Party members

Member	Title/College/School
Jennifer Milam	Professor, PVC Academic Excellence (Chair)
Rachel Fowell	Manager, Equity Diversity & Inclusion
Petrina Mosely	Senior Data Analyst, Strategic Planning and Performance
Anna Giacomini	Professor, CESE, School of Engineering
Regina Berretta	Professor, CESE, School of Information and Physical Sciences
Jessica Allen	Senior Lecturer, CESE School of Engineering (ARC Decra)
James McCoy	Professor, CESE School of Mathematical & Physical Sciences
Renee Goreham	Lecturer, CESE School of Mathematical & Physical Sciences
Thomas Nann	Prof & Head of School, CESE School of Information & Physical Sciences
Hannah Power	Assoc. Professor, CESE School of Environmental & Life Sciences
Vicki Keast	Assoc. Professor, CESE School of Information & Physical Sciences
Jon Hirst	Professor, CHMW School of Biomedical Sciences
Jay Horvat	Assoc. Professor, CHMW School of Biomedical Sciences
Allyson Holbrook	Professor, CHSF School of Education
Lucy Murtha	Lecturer, Postdoc Research Fellow CHMW School Medicine & Public Health
Leila Momenzadeh	Assoc. Lecturer, CESE - School of Engineering
Ayanka Wijayawardena	Lecturer, Research Fellow, CESE (Global Centre for Environmental Remediation)

In addition to engagement with key roles such as Assistant Deans EDI and College EDI Committees, Athena SWAN is also socialised with staff through a number of communication and engagement platforms including dedicated webpages, presentations to Colleges, linkage to related themes and events (such as International Women's Day), and outreach and networking programs.

## KEY FINDINGS FROM THE BRONZE AWARD SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The University's Bronze Action Plan summarised key findings under 9 themes (Figure 11). In the development of the Cygnets, these focus areas were revisited with many themes still relevant and weaved into the Cygnets to ensure evidenced-based and meaningful activity. The University continues to recognise (from the Bronze Award self-assessment process) that most of the solutions still lie within improvements to the system, and with that approach, our institution continues to tackle systemic change through focus on processes, systems, policies, and culture.



**Figure 11.** Themes identified during bronze application

The University remains committed to the underrepresentation of women in STEM, specifically in the College of Engineering Science & Environment where the establishment of a pipeline of students and staff is required to move the dial. By increasing the number of female role models, the institution can attract and retain female students who might consider an academic career and nurture the next generation. The number of role models however is limited, and we must address this issue by attracting more women in STEM to our University.

Numbers, however, are only part of the story. The University acknowledges that it must focus efforts on retaining female staff by providing an inclusive culture. Ensuring processes such as promotions are free from bias and acknowledging the challenges of non-linear career paths (through relative-to-opportunity considerations) are crucial elements for the progression and retention of women. Providing tailored career development and opportunities is also critical and includes the upskilling of managers to have career conversations with women. Identifying and acknowledging systemic barriers such as research and workload practices will also ensure that women are able to excel.

Data was identified as a key enabler for the University of Newcastle and remains an important focus to ensure a full picture of the micro-aggressions experienced by women are identified. In addition, collecting data on impact (not just progress) was limited prior to Bronze with many initiatives not well measured beyond participant numbers or links with one measure. The University remains committed to more nuanced data collection and analysis that will also include Intersectional data.

### CONTEXTUAL FACTORS IMPACTING THE ACTIVITIES, IMPLEMENTATION AND/OR DESIRED OUTCOMES OF THE ATHENA SWAN ACTION PLAN

In a necessary response to funding reforms and Government policy changes, compounded by the financial impacts of Covid-19 on the Tertiary Sector, the University underwent a comprehensive restructuring program, entitled 'Enabling Change' in 2021. This resulted in five Faculties becoming three Colleges and a rationalisation of numerous courses that were no longer sustainable. Staff numbers were impacted, but data was analysed at critical stages of the program to ensure that women were not being disproportionately impacted to men. The University also used the opportunity to target a number of roles to women where significant underrepresentation existed.

Resourcing for the Athena SWAN project was affected during this time as the two prior Athena SWAN leads (Academic and Professional) left during the Enabling Change period and due to the establishment of new roles and teams, the Athena SWAN Project timeline for identification and progression of Cygnets was impacted and delay by nearly a year. Despite these challenges, a new senior academic member (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Academic Excellence) was appointed to lead the project, to establish a new working group and to identify the five key barriers. The proposed Cygnets received in principle support from the Senior Executive in the final quarter of 2021.

Budgets for some initiatives were reduced, which impacted on what was originally thought possible in the Bronze phase; however, the University approved the continuation of a number of key strategies such as the Women in Research Fellowships and the Women in Leadership Program as part of its commitment to ensuring gender equity remains a priority. Due to staff being required to work from home, many key programs were put on hold over 2020 and 2021, which in turn impacted the time required to demonstrate sustained impact.



## Certificates, Accreditation, Exemptions

Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace<sup>1</sup>



Exemption under section 126 of the Anti-discrimination Act 1977<sup>2</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.newcastle.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/861481/BFW-e-flyer-for-accredited-organisations.pdf](https://www.newcastle.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/861481/BFW-e-flyer-for-accredited-organisations.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.newcastle.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/861477/2019\\_s126\\_University-of-Newcastle\\_granted.pdf](https://www.newcastle.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/861477/2019_s126_University-of-Newcastle_granted.pdf)